

OPEN SESSION: There were several members of the public present (see attached notes).

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 29th March 2006 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: Cllr D E Cracknell (Town Mayor)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr P Chambers
Cllr Mrs B A Charlton
Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr D R Cole
Cllr C Ford
Cllr N W Light
Cllr W S Rippon-Swaine
Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan
Cllr B H Terry
Cllr M H Thierry
Cllr N Wood

IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk

C/4519 ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M F Daly.

C/4520 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

C/4521 PRESENTATION OF GRANT AID CHEQUES

Cllr Chambers presented a cheque for £600 to Mr Richards of New Forest North Citizens Advice Bureaux towards running costs. Mr Richards thanked the Council for its support.

Cllr Terry presented a cheque for £250 to Mr Bettle of Ringwood Tourism Group towards the production of the Ringwood Mini Guide. Mr Bettle thanked the Council for its generous donation and explained that the purpose of the Mini Guide was to bring more visitors in to the town.

It was noted that a cheque for £200 had been sent to the Friends of Ringwood Health Centre to go towards the purchase of a blood pressure monitor.

C/4522 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd February 2006, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/4523**COMMUNICATIONS OF THE MAYOR**

A letter had been received from Friends of Ringwood Health Centre thanking the Council for its grant aid of £200.

The Mayor reported that the closing date for nominations for Community Awards was 14th April. He asked anyone wishing to nominate someone for an Award to contact the office.

The Mayor advised members and congratulated students of Ringwood School who had come 3rd in the County Council's first Futures Group School Project Competition on development of policies to show how they wanted their areas to look in 2020.

C/4524**QUESTIONS OF THE MAYOR**

Cllr Mrs Sullivan asked if there were any outreach workers based in Ringwood to promote better conduct to young people in an attempt to prevent incidents such as those referred to in the Open Session. The Town Clerk reported that the County Council had outreach services in the recreation centre and medical centre. It was also noted that Connexions hoped to have a base in Ringwood later this year.

Cllr Ford reported that the County Council was in the process of recruiting more Accredited Community Safety Officers (ACSO) and asked if Ringwood could put in a bid to have more patrols in the town. The Town Clerk agreed to look into this.

C/4525**POLICE REPORT**

The Mayor invited Inspector Gerry Hutchings to give a report on policing in the town.

Inspector Hutchings explained that, with effect from 3rd April 2006, the New Forest unit would be merging with West Hampshire to form the West Hampshire Operational Command Unit. As a result of a new funding scheme set up by the government, there would be a total of 90 Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) operating across this area, which includes the New Forest, Andover, Eastleigh and Hedge End.

Cllr Thierry was concerned that members of the public felt threatened in their own neighbourhood and had the perception that the Police were ineffectual. He said that it was rare for officers to get out of their cars and engage with the public. Inspector Hutchings replied that there were 3 dedicated beat officers operating in the town, whose role it was to be out and about on foot. He said that public reassurance was extremely important and encouraged people to contact the Police if they had any concerns. He did however stress that Ringwood is a very safe place to live and has a very low record of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Cllr Clarke asked for a definition of neighbourhood policing units. Inspector Hutchings replied that this was a new policing model, which must be adopted by 2008. It had not yet been determined when Hampshire would adopt the model, but when it did, there would be a dedicated team for each area consisting of a sergeant, constables, PCSOs and ACSOs.

Cllr Mrs Charlton praised the work of PC Chris White, the Town Beat Officer, and said that he did a fantastic job. She would, however, like to meet the other two officers who were operating in the town.

The Mayor thanked Inspector Hutchings for attending the meeting.

C/4526

REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Written reports were received from County Cllr N Clarke and District Cllr C Treleaven (Annex 'A').

District Cllr L C Ford reported that the Conservative group would be nominating Cllr Bill Dow for Vice Chairman for the coming municipal year.

District Cllr M Thierry reported that, as a result of industrial action on Tuesday, refuse had not been collected on this day and would not be collected until the following Tuesday. He said that he had been concerned about the reporting in the local press on the subject of cemeteries, which had included false information and misquotes. It was noted that the District Council was in the process of reviewing the method of refuse collection and was evaluating the use of wheelie bins. It was also noted that the hedges around the car parks had been cut back to the height of the fence and would in future be maintained at this height.

District Cllr J Heron reported that the National Park Authority would take over responsibility for planning matters in the National Park from 3rd April 2006. He also reported that there had been a marked increase in the number of parking tickets that had been issued in the town since the District Council's parking attendants took over at the beginning of the year.

C/4527

RECREATION, LEISURE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr Light presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 1st March 2006.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 1st March 2006 be approved and adopted.

C/4528

PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Clarke presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee held on 3rd March 2006.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd March 2006 be approved and adopted.

C/4529

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Chambers presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 22nd March 2006.

F/3896: It was noted that this minute had been amended to show that Cllr Chamber's interest had been in the agenda item relating to advertising on the Rotary picnic area fence, and not to a grant application.

F/3903: Cllr Thierry said that, as Portfolio Holder for the Environment, he was responsible for the removal of posters across the District. He said that there was a plague of posters throughout the town and he was seeking to bring order to the matter by implementing a policy that serves the needs of the community and deals with posters that shouldn't be up. He said that he had been using Ringwood as a pilot scheme and had given the Town Council the authority to remove banners from the fence around the Rotary Picnic Area. However, he was

concerned that the current Town Council policy was for banners to be left in place if they were for the benefit of the people of the town. He felt that any banners that were promoting an activity for commercial gain, such as the Fun Fair and Continental Market, should be removed.

The Town Clerk informed members that the District Council’s Car Park Manager had given the Town Council unrestricted agency powers over banners on the Rotary picnic area fence. He had written to the Waste Policy Manager six months ago to ask if the District Council had a policy that the Council could implement but had not received a reply. He said that, when the District Council did agree a policy, the Town Council would have to consider whether to take on the powers within a district-wide policy, or hand back responsibility to the District Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 22nd March 2006, as amended at F/3896, be approved and adopted.
- 2) That the policy on banners on the Rotary picnic area fence be referred back to Committee for further consideration.

**C/4530
FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

April 2006

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 5 th April
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 19 th April
FULL COUNCIL	7.00pm	Wednesday 26 th April
Planning, Town & Environment	2.05pm	Friday 28 th April

It was noted that students from Ringwood School would be giving a presentation at the next Full Council meeting on what they would like to see in the town for the young people.

The Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – MARCH 2006

Report by County Councillor Nigel Clarke

Introduction:

I have attended since my last report:

- New Forest Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – an overarching group designed to ensure joint working by various agencies. My perception is that it is long on form but short on substance.
- Corporate Community Strategy/Community Safety Group meeting attended by officers & members – another worthy body holding hands but little discernable benefit to me or the electors I am meant to represent. My comments were not supportive of what they were trying to do, but the pressure for such coalitions comes strongly from Central Government!
- New Forest Highways Transport Advisory Panel (one of half a dozen) – another lengthy meeting, which contained about 15 minutes of value for Ringwood. Their purpose are under review as part of an emerging concept called Hampshire Action Teams (HATs), watch this space as it is meant to connect HCC, DC, P/TC & other bodies in a more focussed way. The New Forest HAT will be co-terminous with the NFDC, but see LGR!
- Diversity training arranged by the Forest Forge Theatre on which I am a HCC Trustee – interesting in that the nearest that locally we could say we have in ‘hard to reach & different groups’ are our gypsy enclaves.
- Another Patient & Public Information Forum at Bransgore, which sadly just about mustered a quorum, so much for its role as an effective link between the public & the NHS in the shape of the PCT; another organisation with a shoe string budget & little engagement with the wider public;
- Environment Policy & Review Committee: two major papers were discussed:
 - Hampshire Minerals & Waste Local Development – Core Strategy, which has to be submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of March; key elements for us is the continuing extraction in the Avon Valley, greater emphasis on recycling construction material & that reduced reliance on land fill sites – we are running out of them.
 - Project Integra Business Plan 2006 –11: how the organisation will deliver increased recycling targets over the next 5 years.
 - An internal search for greater effectiveness & cost savings for the Highways & Transport Divisions – the accepted model will be based on greater decentralisation to the four area offices, in our case Jacob Gutter Lane & thinning out staff at Winchester.
- Group Meeting – main themes were, why was there a cost overrun that was not forecasted at Adult Services & what lessons can be learned; & the objectives underlying the creation of HATs – there is a framework

but a lot of work needs to be put in to clarify roles, relationships & resources.

- Highways Open Day at Jacobs Gutter Lane, which was informative as to the scale of the responsibilities, standards & ping/response times. Generally, it was felt that, given funding levels, the service was as good as could be reasonably expected in the light of the fact that most of the road system is based on the old gravel roads with a thin layer of tarmac.
- New Forest Community First (HCC Trustee) – an umbrella community group delivering a number of services in the New Forest, which are appreciated by their users & as a result has been successful in moving a large portion of its funding to three year service agreements.
- Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee where the main issues were revised proposals for rationalising the Ambulance Trust estate, which is still built on three core locations now supported by a second tier of ambulance stations of which there will probably be three in the New Forest – Hythe, Lymington/New Milton? & Ringwood; & a review to see what District Councils & PCTs were doing as regard promoting the Public Health agenda. I have difficulty with what has been reported & how effective in practice are the actions underway or to be done. Many of the areas are in the fields of behavioural change miles away from the original ‘hard engineering’ approach to public health; what with all the legislation & worthy advice we should have been there years ago, so I shall advocate modest, measurable actions that might actually achieve something.
- Full Council, 30th March, tomorrow will be mainly devoted to tidying up end of year business.

Other matters:

- The informal members/officers meeting, 15th March, on traffic management issues was productive & if the actions are carried out make a measurable difference to some of our long-standing traffic issues.
- Local government reorganisation, along with other major changes, moves steadily onwards with the expectation that a White Paper will be published before the summer recess. It will probably make a strong case for enlarged unitaries with a local tier of community groups to bridge the gap between what in our case could be very wide spread organisations due to the rural/urban mix of Hampshire.

REPORT TO RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL FOR 29TH MARCH 2006

By District Councillor Chris Treleaven (Ringwood East and Sopley)

TOPICS FROM NFDC ECONOMY AND PLANNING SERVICES (his special interests)

1) New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) – from April 1st, NFNPA takes over the planning function for the Park area from NFDC. Their new Planning Dept, headed by Steve Avery, will send your Council details of all planning applications for those areas of Ringwood within the Park, and your Council will be able to comment on these as now. If your comments are at variance with their officers' recommendations, the particular application will then go to their Planning Committee for determination.

2) Employment Land Review.

The results of the recent survey on whether the District has sufficient land allocated for employment use will be presented in the next two weeks. No decisions on new or re-allocated sites will be made without further consultation with Town and Parish Councils.

3) Planning Gain Supplement

The Deputy Prime Minister is currently consulting Councils (and everyone else) on a new Development Land Tax. This tax would be intended to fund new infrastructure to support new development arising from granting planning permissions. (Largely to replace Section 106 developers' contributions).

The consultation documents reveal that current market prices for land use are:-
Agricultural: £9287/ha; Residential: £2,460,000/ha; Business (B1) £749,000/ha.
(1 ha = 2.5acres)

These prices may explain why allocated employment land does not come forward!

4) Draft NFDC Strategy for Economic Development

A new draft Strategy for the District for the next four years will be available for consultation this Spring. Emphasis will be placed on deliverable measures to increase value-added employment throughout the District (and hence salaries!)

5) Procurement – selling to the Council

NFDC spends many millions each year on goods and services to fulfil its elected policies. One of the disincentives to smaller, local businesses in bidding for NFDC contracts is the expensive and time-consuming exercise of credit and technical accreditation. It is intended to remove this barrier for contracts less than £25,000 later this summer. If this proposal is agreed, this Councillor will be encouraging our Chamber of Trade and Commerce to publicise the many opportunities to gain business from NFDC.